



KEITH WATERHOUSE ON MONDAY

Address unknown

A FEW days ago some students in Norfolk pulled off a hoax. They sent out a circular purporting to be from the chief planning officer of one of the local district councils, telling households that the names of all their villages were to be changed.

"In order to simplify planning procedure, and in co-operation with the Post Office under Phase II of Local Government Reorganisation, each village in the county will eventually have a different name," said the bogus circular.

Then it went on to offer ten suggested new names for local villages, asking residents to consider them and decide which they liked best.

The Daily Telegraph's Peter Simple was taken in by this prank and so, depressingly, were many Norfolk villagers. Meekly and obediently they filled in their questionnaires and despatched them to the bewildered planning officer.

Depressing, but not surprising. These good people of Norfolk, like the rest of us, are so punch drunk by local government reform that they will believe everything. If you told them that the names of their villages were to be abolished altogether, to be replaced by numbers or sets of initials, they would probably accept it with heavy resignation.

It's recognised by all but a few fat cats in the county halls that the reorganisation of our traditional council structure into metropolitan districts and whatnot—the brainwave of that sorcerer's apprentice Peter Walker—was a flop.

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The most tangible result is that large numbers of people no longer know whether they are living in Pontefract or Welwyn Garden City.

The damage is done now and you would think that politicians would steer well clear of the local government disaster area. But no. Here comes a Labour Party working group, tiptoeing to the very edge of the steaming crater and prodding the debris with sticks.

This group doesn't want to change the names of villages. This group thinks big. This group wants to abolish entire counties.

It is suggesting, in a confidential consultation document, that local government should be reformed yet again. Our present system of 45 English counties, 36 metropolitan district councils and 333 other district authorities should be swept away. In their place we would have (fanfare of trumpets) "a new group of 200 regional councils."

This is not a student hoax.

Nor, thank God, is it yet official Labour policy. I trust that it never will be—unless Labour, in this mania for reorganisation, wants to rechristen itself the Kamikaze Party.

If we must have change for change's sake, I have a more constructive suggestion.

People who live in, say, Bruddersford, should have their affairs governed by the Bruddersford Town

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Council. Residents of Loamshire should come under the wing of the Loamshire County Council.

Bruddersford should not be combined with the neighbouring borough and renamed after a defunct river. Loamshire should not be combined with half the next county and renamed the Tramshed Metropolitan District—or, if it comes to that, Regional District No. 199.

The merit of this system is that it has been tried, and it worked. And even rheumy-eyed oldest inhabitants could remember their addresses.

LESSER EVIL?

I CAN'T see any argument against President Carter's neutron bomb that doesn't apply to nuclear weapons in general.

A bomb that kills people but leaves their property intact sounds, on the face of it, a walkover for peace-mongers (of whom I count myself one). "Why not," they ask, "a bomb that destroys property but leaves people alive?" Neat.

But when the moral juggling display is over the plain fact is that we have a choice of two evils—the other one being your old-fashioned H-bomb that does everything the neutron bomb can do, plus leaving its victims in a heap of rubble.

The case against nuclear warfare is absolute. But the only case against the neutron bomb as such is that it is too devilish sophisticated. The logical end to that argument is to lace the thing with napalm.

PUBLIC OPINION

I SEE from your readers' letters that the great British pastime of miner-bashing is once more in progress.

In most civilised countries miners are held in high esteem and are paid accordingly.

I wonder if some of the critics are office workers—living off the backs of the manual workers. — F. Wilson Mansfield, Notts.

● WHAT disgusting views some readers hold about miners.

True, there are some rather silly men among those who represent them, but the majority of miners are prepared to get on with the job. Many would like to know what £135 looks like, let

Time to stop bashing the miners

alone receive that much each week.

My husband's take-home pay is £38. Even with concessionary coal our standard of living leaves a great deal to be desired.—Mrs. J. James Rugeley, Staffs.

● A FRIEND who works with my husband called on me recently. He had come to say that my husband was in hospital after having a finger ripped off in some machinery.

Guess what my husband's job is—yes, he's a miner.—Mrs. Babs Hall, Mountain Ash, Glam.

● YOUR reader Mr. G. E. Hiron, who says his take-home pay is just

£31 a week, should consider himself not so badly off.

I work down a coal-mine and my take-home pay is only £38—this for such unnatural work in dust, darkness and stinking, sweat-soaked clothes. C. Williams, Rhondda.

● I AM the wife and daughter of miners.

■ I SAW your picture of the duck that hatched twenty-five ducklings and realised that it must have been celebrating the Silver Jubilee—with one duckling for every year!—Karen Buckley, Northampton.

All my life I seem to have been listening to people telling the miners what they should do. I am sick of stupid statements like "holding the country to ransom."

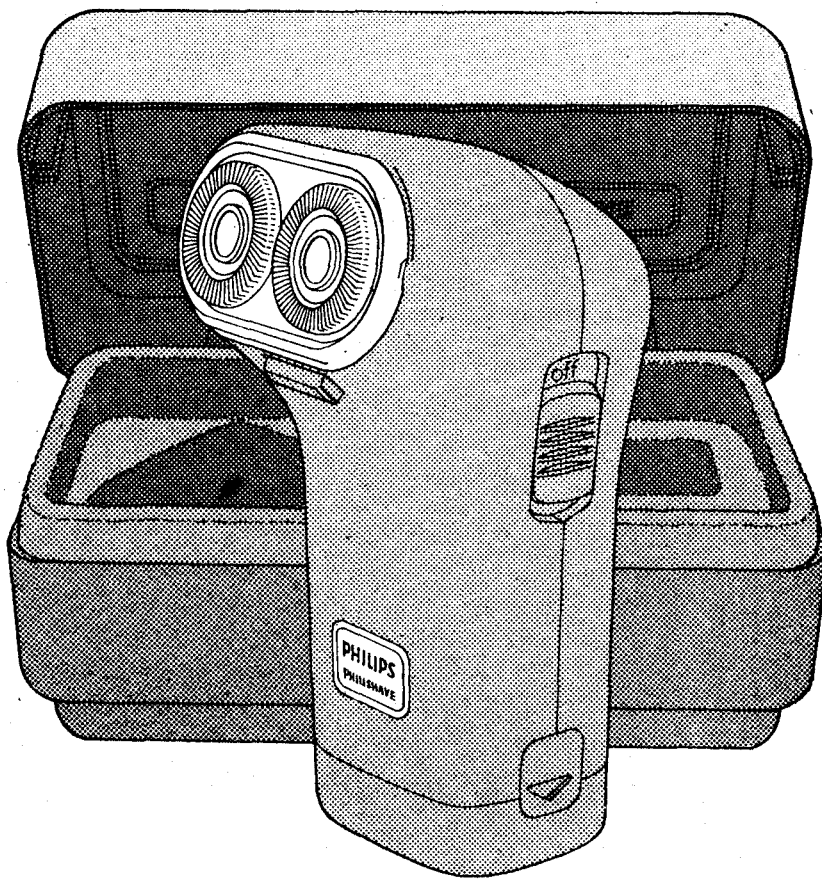
I wonder what would happen if all the miners packed it in and left it to their critics to get the coal? — Mrs. B. Moore, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Notts.



PHILIPS

**"Porter!
The prongs of my shaver
do not fit the holes of
the socket."**

Wherever you're going
a Battery Philishave is the answer.



Battery Philishave. Simply years ahead